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LETTER DATED 15 JANUARY 1991 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO
THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the text of a message from President Hafez al-Assad of the Syrian Arab Republic addressed to President Saddam Hussein of the Republic of Iraq through the broadcast media on the afternoon of Saturday, 12 January 1991. I request you to have the text of the message circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Dia-Allah EL-FATTAL
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex

Message of 12 January 1991 from the President of the Syrian Arab
Republic to the President of the Republic of Iraq

With unalloyed brotherly sentiments and sincere patriotic feeling, and with an understanding of the dangers encompassing the Arab world in general and fraternal Iraq in particular, I address you through the airwaves with this message in a desire for us to avert undesirable consequences for the nation and for Iraq. I am most hopeful that my message will meet with your understanding of the true nature of my motives and with the response that I would desire.

In the delicate circumstances through which the Arab world is passing, which are being monitored and whose developments are being followed with the greatest interest and concern, by the masses of our nation and the peoples and Governments of the world, I can find no better preface to my addressing you than that of affirming the ties of brotherhood which bind our two peoples in Syria and Iraq and of asserting my conviction that the constant concern of both fraternal countries should focus on addressing the challenges and dangers that confront the Arab nation.

I decided to address this message to you, despite the differences in viewpoint and the unfriendly relations that have separated us for many years, in the hope that such matters would become better and more useful for our two countries and for the nation. The matter with which we are concerned makes it necessary that we should be frank with each other and that we should exchange views, since any affront to Iraq is ultimately an affront, in one form or another, to Syria and to the Arab nation.

When we see that Iraq is confronting a grave danger, as is the case at the present time, the differences between the two fraternal countries diminish and disappear, because those things that bring us together are much greater and much more important than any differences or selfish gains that we may perceive, if, indeed, it is true to say that there are any such gains to be made.

A grasp of the seriousness of the danger posed impels one to speak with the frankness required of fraternal and patriotic ties. At the outset, I nevertheless hasten to express the hope that my words will not be understood as a wish to aggravate the situation but rather in the sense that it is my concern to speak to men's hearts. It is my goal that rationality and emotion should interact and that thought and action should rise to such a level as to realize the higher national interest and bring the enemies of our nation to miss an opportunity beyond anything that they could never dream, particularly since this opportunity comes to them by our own action and our own power of decision. Accordingly, we must eliminate it entirely by our own action and by virtue of our own decision, without being forced to do so by anyone and without fear of anyone but rather taking as our point of departure a belief in the need for such action and for such a decision. It is this that is the role of valiant Iraq at this time. Thus we will not allow the enemies of the nation to reap any benefit by exploiting this opportunity.

Although Arabs may undergo circumstances held to be sensitive, it does not prevent them from listening to the voices of their brothers who are concerned for them.

The Arab interest is of concern to us. And the interest of Iraq is of concern to us. We are both part of the Arab nation, and thence comes the commonality of outlook that stems from a common history, a common heritage, a common civilization, a common language, commonality of spiritual values, shared pains and hopes, a common destiny and a commonality in all that is implied by our affiliation with the Arab nation from whose territory divine missions set forth and by whose philosophy, science and ideals the world was overwhelmed. Accordingly, the commonality in which we are involved in word and deed constitutes for us a right and a duty.

Hence, it is the duty of a brother that he should communicate what he has to say to his brother, whose duty it is, in turn, to listen to what his brother has to say with the greatest sensitivity and with an open mind, because they both share a common destiny. Whoever listens to what his brother has to say has suffered no loss and misses no new idea.

While I would stress the grave danger confronting the Arab nation in general and Iraq in particular, and while I call for enemies to be deprived of opportunity, I am not concerned with discussing truth and falsehood with respect to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, which is another matter and for the discussion of which this is neither the time nor the place. The important thing in present circumstances, however, is that we face a grave and dangerous situation threatening Iraq.

Our concern for Iraq, for its territory, its people and its army, is the same as our concern for ourselves, because Iraq is a dear and precious part of the land of the Arabs and of the Arab nation.

The beneficiary of the situation at the present moment is Israel, which is occupying Arab territory and plotting and striving for continued expansion on Arab land. It is profiting from the present inter-Arab situation and intra-Arab antagonism, while the Arabs, jointly and severally and headed by Iraq, are the losers. I do not see that any of the Arabs have an interest in what is happening now, and I do not see that Iraq has any interest in it either.

The fundamental interest of the Arab nation, particularly at the present stage of history, lies in coherence and genuine solidarity and in each Arab country ensuring the tranquillity of all other Arab countries, even if there are differences between them with respect to one or more inter-Arab issues.

I do not wish to believe that the Arabs' sense of a common destiny has lapsed or that solidarity among the Arabs has become impossible. I wish rather to stress that the grievous character of the danger is apt to strengthen the sense of a common destiny and to promote Arab solidarity and the solution of inter-Arab differences through dialogue rather than force.

I should like to stress in particular that the responsibility of Iraq, Syria and other Arab countries is to assist in ensuring the tranquillity and sense of security of neighbouring Arab countries, even if differences should emerge from

time to time since such differences can be remedied by means of dialogue, and in such a manner as to build confidence and eliminate any Arab country's fear of another. This will help to promote a spirit of brotherliness and achieve effective Arab solidarity, and it will represent an important step on the way to a future Arab unity achieved through conviction and faith in the salvation of the nation through such unity.

The future before us is open to the unification of the entire nation, and our nation is a great nation in and of itself and by virtue of its mission, its heritage and the abundance of its capacities. It is capable of providing itself and the world with the same spiritual, intellectual and civilizing radiance with which it enriched mankind in the past.

The difficulty of the current situation in the Arab world and its complexity lie in the dangers entailed by Iraq's entry into Kuwait, its forcible annexation of that country and the elimination of Kuwait as an independent State member of the League of Arab States and of the United Nations. We do not believe that this is legitimate conduct, and Iraq has no right to engage in such conduct even from the point of view of unification since methods of force and violence are not proper and appropriate methods for the achievement of unity but are rather a factor impeding and precluding any endeavour for unity.

May Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait then be the prelude to a new climate in which grave dangers can be averted and in which we may close ranks as a single force in the face of whoever threatens our territory, our interests, our dignity and our destiny.

Some may say that Iraq will be attacked even if it leaves Kuwait. In regard to this matter, I should like to affirm a brotherly covenant which is not open to doubt. If that were to happen after Iraq's departure from Kuwait, Syria, with all its material and moral capabilities, would stand by Iraq in one and the same trench and would fight alongside it with all its strength and all its valour until victory was achieved.

The interest of the nation is above all other interests. For its sake, every sacrifice is of slight importance and every danger is confronted with the appropriate decision and the appropriate stance, and this is what is expected of you yourself.

A decision now taken by you to defuse the crisis and to ward off from Iraq and from the Arab world the dangers of a devastating war will be recorded to your merit as a courageous act properly taken at a proper moment.

We beseech God that he will inspire us to righteousness and will guide us on the right path.

(Signed) Hafez AL-ASSAD
President
Syrian Arab Republic
